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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000302

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV ASEC PMIL PREL ELAB GV

SUBJECT: MILITARY LOOTS POLICE OFFICES, BUT RELATIVE CALM RETURNS

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. After attacking the CMIS (Mobile Company for Security Intervention) headquarters and arresting up to 45 police officials earlier today, elements of the military spent the afternoon moving through the downtown area, vandalizing and looting police offices. Preliminary reporting suggests that the mutineers, under the leadership of Claude Pivi "Coplan," may be responsible for the looting. The Ministry of Defense is reportedly uninolved and has told Coplan to get things under control. As of 16:00, the situation does appear to be calming down as the soldiers return to the barracks with their loot. Meanwhile, the prime minister met with Customs officials earlier today and is optimistic that Customs will resume operations tomorrow. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) A source at the Conakry Central Prison told Pol LES that a group of soldiers ransacked all of the police offices that are co-located with the prison. They did not actually destroy the prison itself, but there are a significant number of police offices at that site. Source said that many police officers fled the scene, and others were arrested and taken away by the soldiers. (COMMENT. Poloff had a meeting some months ago with a police official at this site who said he had more than 300,000 euros, confiscated during a drug bust, sitting in his safe at the time. END COMMENT).

¶3. (SBU) RSO teams report lootings at several different police stations throughout the city. There are also reports of fuel stations closing down because some soldiers started helping themselves.

¶4. (SBU) From Camp Alpha Yaya, a contact reported that around 14:30, an ambulance carrying wounded soldiers and two trucks carrying computers, freezers, air conditioners, and other equipment returned to the camp. Contact said that the equipment was looted from various police stations.

¶5. (S) According to another source, one of Coplan's brand new vehicles, which was reportedly given to him by President Conte, was burned last night. Source said that Coplan blamed the police and said he would retaliate by destroying their offices the following day.

¶6. (S) A contact at the Ministry of Defense said that General Camara is blaming the mutineers for the looting, and reportedly called Coplan to tell him to get the situation under control. Contact said that because the looting had not yet stopped, Camara was planning on sending a delegation to Camp Alpha Yaya to talk to them.

¶7. (C) During a telephone conversation with the Ambassador, Prime Minister Souare said that the arrested police will be treated appropriately, and intimated that he hopes that police forces will be able to return to their jobs soon.

Souare said that the police had been negotiating with the GoG up until two soldiers were killed. (COMMENT. The Ambassador's impression from Souare was that the military unilaterally decided to confront the police, and that the PM had not issued any such instructions. Furthermore, it seemed as if the PM is trying to contain the problem, but that the military, or elements of the military, may be operating independently. END COMMENT).

¶8. (SBU) With respect to the Customs strike, a delegation of Customs officers met with the Prime Minister today, accompanied by the Chef d'Etat Major of the Army. Customs contacts reported that they are demanding promotions, salary increases, undefined "specialized" status, and subsidized rice. Contacts said that the PM told them the GoG would look into their demands, and asked that they be patient as the government needs time to address their issues. He reportedly asked all Customs officials to return to work tomorrow. Contacts said that the delegation is unhappy with the meeting because they did not get anything concrete.

¶9. (C) When he spoke to the Ambassador, the PM confirmed that he had been in negotiations with Customs, noting that he expects them to return to work tomorrow. The Ambassador said that it is important to have the airport functioning normally and getting Customs back on the job will send a positive message to the international community.

¶10. (SBU) As of 16:00, the situation in Conakry is relatively calm. Much of the shooting has died down, and the soldiers have returned to the camps. There is less traffic, but the roads are clear. The airport remains open and

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Embassy is hearing from Air France that they are considering bringing in yesterday's diverted flight.

COMMENT

¶11. (S) The targeted military attack on CMIS headquarters may have been authorized by the Ministry of Defense, but the looting looks to have been orchestrated by Coplan and his mutineers. Coplan's continued ability to act with impunity suggests that the military has little to no control over Camp Alpha Yaya. Furthermore, the GoG may have a difficult time explaining why they cracked down immediately on the police for essentially doing the same thing the mutineers did a few weeks ago. There is little overlap between the civilian and security sectors. The Prime Minister appears to be almost completely removed from dealings with security forces. END COMMENT.

CARTER